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The Relationship Between Humanity Values and Religious Tolerance for Strengthening The Social Cohesion of Urban Communities in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract: The value of humanity is one of the shared values that can strengthen community cohesion, especially in high-risk urban communities. The formation of shared values must be based on local values because each community is formed with local culture and religion. The attitude of religious tolerance is closely related to human moral values that need to be practiced at the individual, community and institutional levels to ensure unity in a multi-religious community. This writing discusses the relationship between humanity values from various religions and religious tolerance as an element of strengthening social cohesion in urban communities. This writing also proposes a conceptual framework for the relationship between humanity values and religious tolerance for strengthening the social cohesion of urban communities. The process of collection and analysis will be performed to validate or refine the hypothesis that has been formulate in this writing.

Keywords: humanity values, religious tolerance, social cohesion, urban community

1. Introduction

Unity is a benchmark of developed countries as intended in the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (WKB2030). However, the diversity of communities with different cultures and religions causes each of them to try to defend their own interests, especially the complex and mixed urban communities. The competition of various communities creates social deficits that need to be managed, among them the deficit of the religious dimension. Lack of religious tolerance will strain relations in society, trigger bloody conflicts if not managed, and threaten social cohesion in society.

Behavior based on humanity values can stabilize community relations and form a peace-loving society. However, many past studies only look at the value of humanity in certain religions and do not take the viewpoint of other religions as a whole in accordance with the diversity of religions in Malaysia. This situation can create a clash between religions until the community fails to understand how to behave in a multi-religious community. Thus, there is a need to bring a

new and holistic paradigm to form a behavioral framework based on human values. Behavior-based on humanity values advocated by each religion needs to be highlighted and strengthened in society.

The main objective of this writing is to develop a conceptual framework of the relationship between humanity values and religious tolerance to be implemented in the framework of social cohesion of urban communities. The results of this study have the potential to be used by other researchers to conduct studies on the development of multi-ethnic community cohesion, especially in urban areas.

2. Problem Statement

Harmony and unity are the keys to progress. A country of ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity like Malaysia makes relationships in society often exposed to the risk of conflict. The community relations are mixed with moments of unity and moments of difference. Among the moments of difference that have a big impact on social relations in Malaysia is the difference in religious and ethnic dimensions.

The first issue is the need to manage the social deficit in religious and ethnic dimensions. The emphasis on religious and ethnic dimensions is also translated in the National Unity Policy and National Unity Blueprint 2021-2030 as one of the social deficits in society that need to be managed. The thickness of ethnic and religious boundaries when mobilized by groups on the fringes of development such as the B40 group especially in urban areas and with political interests, it is certain that the role of ethnicity and religion as a peacemaker and the well-being of the community turns bad and divides the community of religious diversity (Mansor, 2012).

The second issue is the problem due to religious and ethnic differences in urban communities. Migration and urbanization factors make 75.6% of the community in Malaysia concentrated in urban areas (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2019). Therefore, efforts to strengthen urban community relations are intensified and strengthened through the National Community Policy 2019 (DKN 2019). The B40 Urban Community that lives in the People's Housing Program (PPR) area is a focus in WKB2030 and DKN2019. This is because urban communities in PPR are categorized as high-risk neighborhoods. The diversity of religions in the urban community in PPR causes a deficit in religious and ethnic dimensions such as the issue of blocking public paths due to placing religious equipment in the corridor area (BERNAMA, 2016), the issue of throwing away alcohol bottles in the mosque area (Mokhtar, 2019) and the issue of temple demolition (Kumar , 2019). A study of 25 PPR neighborhoods in the Klang Valley area by Denison (2020) shows that there is still the behavior of individuals who lack of moral value and cause conflict in the community. The study of Marzudi et al., (2019) also found that urban communities of different ethnicities and religions are still suspicious of each other which affects their attitudes and behaviors.

The third issue is the lack of focus on local values that form social cohesion especially in urban communities in PPR areas. Recent discussions on social cohesion have emphasized the importance of shared values as an element of strengthening social cohesion (Sheehy, 2015; J. Cui et al., 2017; Christopher et al., 2017; Szromek, 2020). However, based on observations made on past studies on social cohesion in communities in the People's Housing Program area in Malaysia from 2015 to 2020, the focus on the values found in the community descriptively was only carried out in Kedah (Ahmad Shukri et al., 2017) and Putrajaya (Abd Aziz et al., 2016). The rest, studies on urban communities in urban areas focus more on socioeconomic factors, security, policy and community development (Dennison Jayasoria, 2020; Faten Nadhirah, 2019; Junaidi et al., 2018; Mohd Nasir Selamat et al., 2018; Saripah Osman, 2018; Nurfariza Mohd Radzi et al., 2017; Dennison Jayasoria, 2016; Junaidi et al., 2015).

Therefore, based on the emphasis on the elements of value in the local community as an element of strengthening social cohesion, this writing suggests the element of the practice of humanity value and religious tolerance as an element that needs to be identified and emphasized to strengthen the social cohesion of low-income urban communities of various ethnicities in Malaysia.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Humanity Values

The value of humanity refers to the values of humanity practiced by individuals in their behavior (Nowack & Schoderer, 2020). These humanity values are divided into individual values (Sack, 2017; Breidahl et al., 2018) and societal values (Hofstede, 2013; Schwartz, 2014). The value of humanity also refers to the values found from personal, cultural and religious views as suggested by Tan (2017) who found that these values contribute to the formation of the values of the multi-ethnic society in Malaysia.

Shared values in society become the basis of social cohesion because the values held by individuals will be translated through behavior whether positive or otherwise. Behavior-based on humanity values can strengthen the relationship between two different groups (Buyuker et al., 2018). In fact, the humanity values advocated by certain religions have an impact on the complex decision-making process and prevent behavior that can cause conflict (Szromek, 2020).

J. Cui et al., (2017) stated that humanity values associated with religion significantly influence behavior in the community and need to be given special focus to practice. Behavior-based on humanity values differs from behavior driven by the values of other organizations such as work organizations because the behavior is no longer voluntary but

based on the shared values of the organization (Sheehy, 2015). When behavior is driven by values that are not voluntary, personal and on the basis of certain rewards, the relationship between individuals and different groups in a community will still be shaky and lack resilience (Sheehy, 2015; J. Cui et al., 2017); Christopher et al., 2017; Szromek, 2020).

Every religion has particular recommendations for its followers to behave. Szromek (2020) states that among the humanity values based on Christianity that are mobilized to improve relationships in the community are patience, not giving up, gentleness, kindness and courage to speak the truth. Meanwhile, Rohana et al., (2017) found that the value of wisdom and being inclusive advocated in Islam can be a bulwark to deal with the chaos that causes confusion. Kamble et al., (2014) also stated that the values of peace, anti-violence and tranquility in Hinduism provide mental strength that can prevent oneself from negative behavior and causing chaos.

The role of humanity values to deal with the social deficit in the integration process can be observed in the study of Silvia & Chris (2020) as an element that can improve citizenship identity. The study of Zaidin et al., (2014) also states that human spiritual behavior can strengthen cooperation between ethnic and religious groups and is a strategy that can be mobilized to ensure the success of national integration in Malaysia.

Based on the discussion and findings in previous studies, the value of humanity can have an impact in dealing with social deficits in the community and thus can strengthen social cohesion in the community. However, previous studies only looked at the role of certain religions in dealing with the deficit in society. On the other hand, the analysis of the community needs to reflect the diversity that exists, balance each other and find points of commonality in order to guarantee the life satisfaction of all members in a community (Ponisovskiy et al., 2020; Dragolov et al., 2020; Nowack & Schoderer, 2020; Azlina et al., 2011). Therefore, the value of humanity needs to be viewed holistically based on diverse religious perspectives to be used as a framework for strengthening unity so that community relations are more stable, resilient and united in line with the government's goal to improve the quality of life of the community, especially urban communities. Therefore, this writing proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: The value of humanity has a relationship with the social cohesion of the urban community.

3.2 Religious Tolerance

Every religion has its beliefs that are different from other religions. This makes religion as an exclusive matter to other believers. This whole situation is often the cause of misunderstanding and conflict between followers of different religions. Therefore, to ensure harmony and stability in society, religious diversity needs to be recognized at the institutional level while the value of religious tolerance needs to be strengthened at the community and individual levels.

Basically, tolerance comes from the word tolerant. Tolerance is a trait or attitude that exists in humans. Tolerance means being ready to respect or accept different opinions or belief. Tolerance also refers to the ability to survive in the differences to continue the life survival (Vogt, 2007). There are two forms of tolerance which are passive tolerance and active tolerance. Passive tolerance is the acceptance of difference as a factual. While active tolerance is the acceptance to be involved in the differences and variations that exist around. Both forms of tolerance can form a society that can live in peace and harmony and accept the existing diversity (Muhammad, 2009).

Religious tolerance refers to the ability of individuals to accept and respect differences in the beliefs and spiritual practices of others that are contrary to their own religious beliefs (Bakar, 2010). Religious tolerance can be understood when an individual or group takes a respectful, important and empathetic approach in the context of accepting differences, preserving the right of others to value certain beliefs or values while acknowledging that others also have the right to value different beliefs according to their belief systems (Broer et al., 2014).

The management of religious diversity in society is closely related to the governance system of religious diversity management that is tolerant, harmonious, fair and equitable. On the other hand, loose or restrictive management of religious diversity often leads to social tension, hostility and violence. Pew (2012) states that countries that impose restrictions on religious diversity have a high pattern of inter-religious hostility in society. This situation can occur when oppressed religious groups feel threatened and rebel. Therefore, harmonious and balanced governance of religious diversity is needed in society.

The importance of religious tolerance is emphasized in almost every religion in the world. Although Islam does not consider all religions to be an equal, religious tolerance in Islam refers to the acceptance that every human being has freedom of religion and celebrates the differences that exist in society such as differences in culture, language, background and values. Christianity, on the other hand, emphasizes religious tolerance and a harmonious life in a society based on the concept of love for fellow human beings. Likewise, Buddhism adheres to the concept of truth, peace, freedom and tolerance. (Abu Bakar, 2014). This shows that every religion in the world emphasizes the importance of tolerance between religions to ensure a harmonious and united social life. Therefore, this writing proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Religious tolerance has a relationship with humanity values
H3: Religious tolerance has a relationship to the social cohesion of urban communities

4. A Conceptual Framework of the Relationship Between Humanity Values and Religious Tolerance Towards Cohesion in Urban Communities

Based on the hypothesis that has been built, this writing proposes a conceptual framework of the relationship between humanity values and religious tolerance as an important element in strengthening social cohesion in urban communities as shown in figure 1.
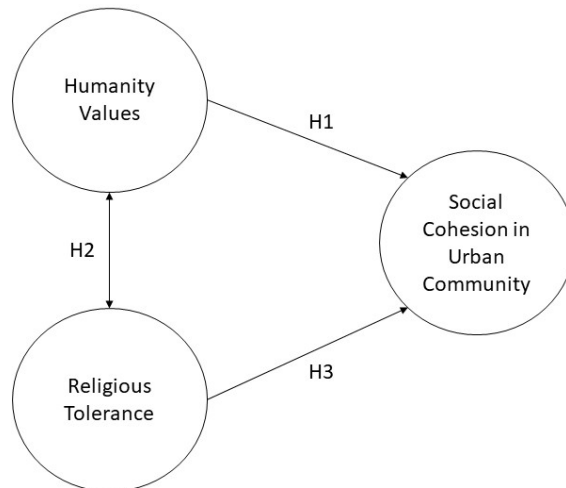

Fig. 1 - A suggested conceptual framework for the relationship between human values and religious tolerance towards the social cohesion of urban communities

The formation of a harmonious society in a multi-ethnic country usually needs to go through a long process. The process of developing a harmonious and advanced society needs to go hand in hand with development from various aspects of politics, administration, economy, education, community structuring, and community management. However, in the vibrancy of a country driving the dream of achieving the status of a developed and high-income country, there is still a group of people who are faced with the challenge of survival and feel threatened which can cause instability in society.

Cities in developed countries such as Italy, France and the United States for example are faced with issues and problems that occur in low-income urban communities. Challenges faced by low-income communities such as competition for job opportunities, lack of support and welfare from the government (Brandolini & Cipolollone, 2002) and family (Kazepov, 1995) have caused instability in the community to the point of threatening national security. For example in 2005 in France, riots and demonstrations that involved violence were held for three weeks by urban communities in low-income areas because of frustration with the management of the diversity of communities in French cities (Recchia, 2008).

The growth of the urban population, the increase in the poverty rate, the increase in the service sector and contract employment, the global financial crisis and natural disasters are issues and problems faced by low-income urban communities in Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal (Heshmati et al., 2015) and Thailand (World Bank, 2020). The crises that occur in the low-income community have caused the community to hold protests and demonstrations against the government as happened in Thailand in 2010 resulting in 91 deaths and thousands of victims suffering injuries (Buchanan, 2013).

Low-income urban community violence has also occurred in the history of community formation in Malaysia in 1969 in Kg Bharu, Kuala Lumpur. Poverty, especially in urban areas, the economic gap between races, the weakness of community management are factors that are often associated with the bloody events of May 13, 1969, which resulted in nearly 200 deaths (Hasim, 1986; Jones, 2014; Bernama, 2019). Violence in low-income urban communities also occurred in Kampung Medan, Petaling Jaya, Selangor in 2001 caused by poverty (New Strait Times, 2007) and the fading of virtues such as the value of tolerance in a multi-ethnic society (Shukri, 2004).

As a result of crises that occur in society, especially in urban communities, the concept of community cohesion began to emerge in 2001 when there were riots in Bradford, England. The concept of community cohesion focuses on efforts to increase understanding and trust between different ethnic, religious and cultural groups and reduce misunderstandings between these groups. The concept of community cohesion is also often applied to communities in urban areas because

of the basis of the formation of urban communities that come from many different backgrounds. The concept of community cohesion is often confused or understood as social cohesion (Cantle, 2008).

The strengthening of social cohesion or community cohesion is closely related to systems, processes and institutions that result from the values in society (Cantle, 2005). The focus in social and community cohesion needs to be emphasized on social processes that support every aspect to build a harmonious society, the level of social capital, wealth distribution, access to service facilities, social order and also values in society (Forrest & Kearns, 2000). Thus, the shared values in a multi-ethnic society can have an impact on the construction of a united society. This statement is supported by Recchia (2008) who found relationship conflicts in low-income urban communities due to the clash of values and cultures coming from diverse community backgrounds. The migration of communities from rural areas to urban areas causes a clash between traditional values and modernized values that can cause conflict in behavioral patterns (Chaudhuri, 2015).

Next, the sharing of common values for strengthening the social cohesion of a community should be based on local history and culture (Rieger, 2017). The tension and conflict that occurs in society at this point are the result of historical events that give meaning to the relationship between different groups, the relationship between society and institutions as well as the relationship between two countries (Rieger, 2017). Practices based on humanity values can strengthen the relationship between two different groups (Buyuker et al., 2018). In fact, the humanity values advocated by certain religions have an impact on the complex decision-making process and prevent behavior that can cause conflict (Szromek, 2020).

Meanwhile in Malaysia, the formation of community values is closely related to religious values (Ahmad, 1998), cultural beliefs and practices such as the cultivation of strong moral values in every layer of the community system with different backgrounds for a long time (Hassan Jaudah, 2003; Ahmad Fakhrurrazi M.Z. 2010; Ibrahim et al, 2012). The practice of values related to culture and religion can form stronger community relations, not prone to violent conflicts and have high resilience (Sheehy, 2015; J. Cui et al., 2017; Christopher et al., 2017; Szromek, 2020).

Spiritual life is the backbone of the formation of a united society as expressed in the first Rukun Negara Malaysia which is Belief in God. This is proven in a study by Hamidi et al., (2016) who found that humanity values such as the value of simplicity are the basis of the unity of multi-religious communities. Silvia & Chriss (2020) also found that behavior based on humanity values based on religions in Indonesia such as tolerance, no coercion and love of peace can form a true citizen's identity. Similarly, the study of Zaidin et al (2014) found values in the Islamic religion which are simplicity, discussion and doing good and avoiding evil can improve the social cohesion of the community.

Today's rapid urbanization has changed the perception and aspirations of individuals and this situation has an impact on religious aspects. Religious orientation that should bring spiritual values becomes a tool to trigger suspicion and gain popularity in political campaigns through hate speeches (Silvia & Chris, 2020). The diversity of religions that should increase behavior based on humanity values has been labeled as the cause of conflict in the competition between majority and minority groups (Kartini et al, 2019). The separation between religion and humanity values in society will worsen individual behavior and shake the unity of society (Rohana et al., 2017; Buyuker et al., 2018; Siti, 2018).

Behavioral relationships based on humanity values and religious tolerance for the integration process can be observed in the study of Silvia & Chris (2020) as an element that can improve citizenship identity. The study of Zaidin et al., (2014) also states that behavior based on humanity values such as tolerance is able to strengthen cooperation between ethnicities and religions and is a strategy that can be mobilized to ensure the success of national integration in Malaysia.

5. Conclusion

This writing has achieved the purpose of explaining the main concept and issue which is the role of humanity values and religious tolerance in strengthening the social cohesion of urban communities. The value of humanity is seen to be able to strengthen the unity of multi-ethnic urban communities. The existing studies are not based on the values of local community formation and have not yet used humanity values as the main basis of the community cohesion framework. This study suggests the construction of a community cohesion framework based on humanity values and religious tolerance for multi-ethnic urban communities so that each community gets the same opportunity to be in a safe and comfortable environment, achieve a high quality of life and further strengthen the process of community integration in Malaysia.

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